

Oft-Neglected Wars

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VII. THE WISHING WAR

When comparing the strengths of the black arts programs of the various armies of the world, the Naør Federation and Tithium were, at their zenith, without peer. Therefore it was only a matter of time before their respective heads of state were pushed to war by ambitious military advisors, each eager to prove that their own program was the most advanced—as well as the deadliest.

Hostilities first broke out when a Tithian passenger plane vanished in thick fog somewhere off the country's eastern coast. Rescue crews combing the water for survivors found only a disturbing arrangement of objects on an uninhabited island near where the aircraft had lost radio contact. Six pinches of tobacco were arranged symmetrically around a flat, round rock upon which an image of an airplane had been painted in glittery red nail polish (later identified as razzle-dazzle by forensics teams).

Naør treachery was immediately suspected. And Naørian Prime Minister Helga Munb did little to calm tensions when she appeared at a press conference wearing razzle-dazzle nail polish. Idly smoking a hand-rolled cigarette as she took reporters' questions, the prime minister suggested with a smirk that Tithium's airplanes were just shoddily constructed.

Several days later a black cloud in the shape of a skeletal hand appeared over Naør's national zoo. Soon thereafter, some of the animals began to suffer miscarriages. The likely target was Yellow Cheek, the venerable

golden musk ape whose lineage was said to date back to the founding of the Næorian republic. Her inability to produce an heir was feared to herald the nation's doom. Meteorologists were finally able to disperse the spectral claw of mist with chemical flares, but the damage had already been done. Jets were scrambled to bomb Tithium in retaliation, but they turned back after one of the pilots became hysterical, claiming that there was ectoplasm oozing from his control panel. Nothing was found upon landing, but this otherwise reassuring discovery only rendered the incident that much more frightening to the upper echelons of the Næorian air force. The Tithians launched an abortive raid of their own, sending a battalion across the border in a predawn raid to capture the Yarmang Missile Base. While they suffered only four casualties during the surprise attack, a phantom appeared to the Tithian commander in a dream and ordered him to release all prisoners and retreat.



Fig 3. Næorian "wishing tank" belching out clouds of copal incense.

In truth, The Wishing War was never realized through battles or air raids, but through black curses, dismal apparitions, and chilling omens. Military head-

X. THE THUNG RIVER VALLEY CALENDARICAL WAR

The Túi Nôn were a nomadic people who roamed the Thung River Valley. They subsisted on mussels, frogs, and freshwater crabs, as well as the edible flowers that grew plentifully along the Thung's banks. Although the river teemed with fish in those days, the Túi Nôn could not eat them because of the stringent dietary laws passed down by the god of their people. His name was Cu'á Thoát Hiê'm, and he commanded and forbade many things. These commandments were catalogued in *The Aggregation of Sublime Edicts*, a holy book regulating everything from the length of beards, to lunch, to periods of courtship. As the religious laws expanded to govern every aspect of Túi Nôn life, they were always being supplemented with indexes and addenda for new and unforeseen circumstances.

The Túi Nôn were considered eccentric by neighboring peoples, for Cu'á Thoát Hiê'm was also prone to erratic revisions of his divine law. These "surprise revelations" might oblige the Túi Nôn to switch holy days around without warning or dance for weeks on end. Sometimes, at the conclusion of a successful harvest, the Túi Nôn were made to fast, so that all the food they'd collected rotted while they went hungry.

The odd spiritual life of the Túi Nôn was explained locally by the fact that they were monotheistic. While neighboring tribes had dozens or even hundreds of gods to divide the duties of rulership, Cu'á Thoát Hiê'm had no other deities to assist him. He never got a moment's rest.

XI. THE NON-COMBAT RELATED FATALITY NAVAL CONFLICT

The NCRF Conflict is neither a hot nor a cold war, but a lukewarm one. Both belligerents—Murgiland and East New Frestia—fully intend to fight, and have engaged in a years-long cat-and-mouse repositioning of their forces for the ultimate strategic advantage. Although their navies have been hovering close, neither has yet settled on the perfect opening move, and casualties on both sides have mounted.

Cause of death	Murgiland	East New Frestia
autoerotic asphyxiation	1	1
bayonet swallowing (wounds sustained during cabaret show)	nil	1
beatings (disciplinary)	4	8
beatings (retaliatory)	4	8
beatings (unspecified causes)	3	7
broken neck while attempting auto-fellatio	2	7
burns (sustained during belowdecks drug lab explosion)	nil	6
burns (sustained during explosion of improperly stored napalm)	54	nil
burns (sustained during fireworks displays intended to raise morale)	nil	3
choking (on a swallowed lighter)	1	nil
choking (during cockroach-eating contest)	2	nil
cholera	172	189
chopped apart by rotary blades (boat propellers)	8	7

XIV. THE GLÜXO-BELKENESE WAR

The Amalgamated Principalities of Glüx and the People's Republic of Belken have warred for over a century with little result, owing to their geographic displacement on opposite sides of the globe. The island nation of Belken has a relatively large navy for its size, but Glüx, centered on the broad Fralpien plains, has no access to a seaport at all. A theoretical Belkenese amphibious assault would first have to pass through the borders of three or four other countries (regardless of direction), and it is very difficult to secure an alliance from the correct combination of fickle nations at the same time.

The obscure origins of the Glüxo-Belkenese conflict date back to the age of sail, when both states were part of the Sartusian Empire. The Glüxors were among the most devoted subjects of the Sartusian throne, and prided themselves on fielding an elite unit of lancers that protected the Empress along her majesty's parade route. They still hearken back to those bygone years as a golden age of material comfort and cultural achievement.

The Belkenese, however, were slaves on the great Sartusian rubber plantations. Suffering under the boot of tyranny and enjoying none of the profit secured by their own sweat, they launched a decades-long guerilla campaign to expulse the empire. While their ragtag Marxist brigades would eventually fly the red flag over Belkentown, their colonial oppressors never recognized the government they formed. The crumbling empire would